1: Beals E-5 (1940-1941) 1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

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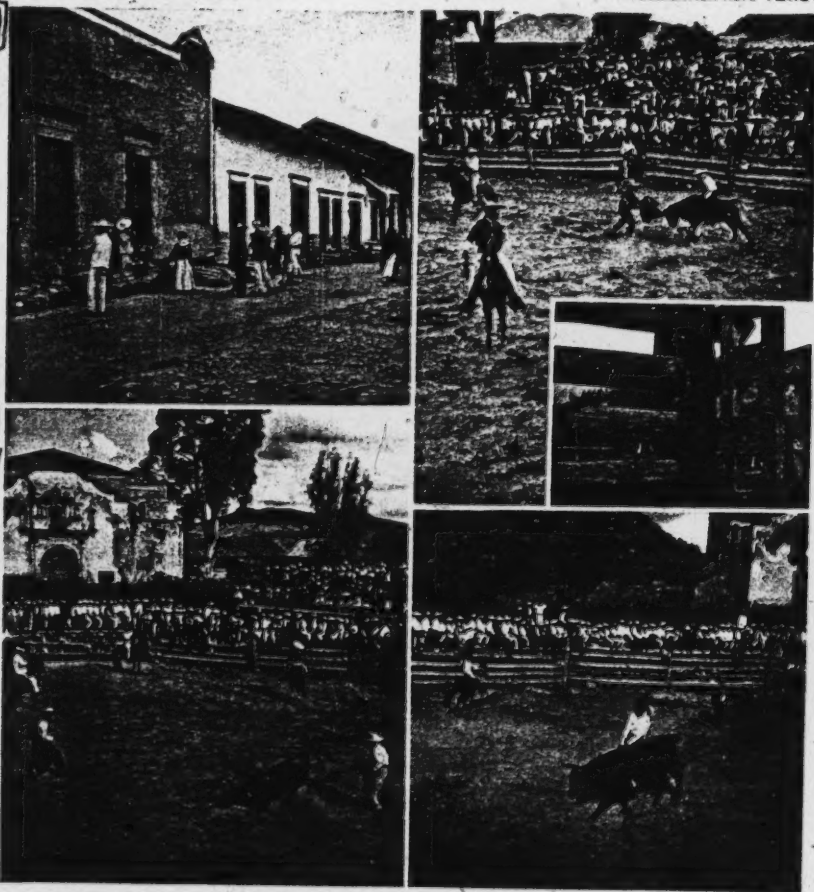

MARKET AND BULL FIGHTING DURING FESTIVAL.

Upper (left): Pottery before being unpacked for the market. *Upper (right):* Riding a bucking bull, the man with cape diverting it from the horses. *Lower (left):* Cowboys (*vaqueros*) throw the bull in the bull ring, then tie a rope around its forequarters. *Lower (right):* Bull riding. *Inset:* Construction of bull ring fence; post on right has holes cut with ax to receive the logs forming the gate.

[End Plate 5]

342 tiles. The other areas have abundant water, but the forests are distant. An exception is the Sierra town of Tarecuato, where, despite abundant forests and the relative scarcity of water, most of the houses are of adobe. In the Sierra it is also becoming increasingly difficult to secure materials for large houses. This fact, together with Mestizo [177] influence, probably is contributing to the spread of adobe, or stone-and-adobe construction.

OF CHERÁN The Town of Cherán

361 The church, parish residence, school, and the municipal building all front on a central plaza. Except for benches and a fountain, the plaza 363 is bare. Cement sidewalks and a surrounding paved area are contributions from the highway construction.

361 The width of the building lots varies from 10 or 12 feet (3 to 3.6 m.) to almost an entire block. 351 The depth in most cases is half that of the block, but in some cases it may be little more than 20 feet (6 m.). As a general rule, however, except in the center of town, the lot is large enough for a small garden, a few fruit trees, and at least a small area devoted to growing types of corn not ordinarily cultivated in the fields (fig. 2). The size of lots varies appreciably, though, in various sections of town. There is no general rule for placing the house upon the lot except in the center of town, where it usually abuts the street, especially if it is of adobe-and-masonry construction. If the house does not front on the street, a fence, generally of stone, is built along the street line. It usually is designed to keep out all animals including pigs, and customarily is above head height so passers-by may not peer over. The interior boundaries are also fenced, but the fences are often less substantial (pls. 2, lower; 3).

351 The lots are all owned individually. They may be bought or sold freely and may be subdivided in 423 various ways. A man with a large lot may sell a portion, creating two lots. Sometimes a man who may wish to enlarge his holdings will buy a strip from an adjoining lot or even the entire lot and merge the two pieces into a single lot. Heirs may also divide lots.

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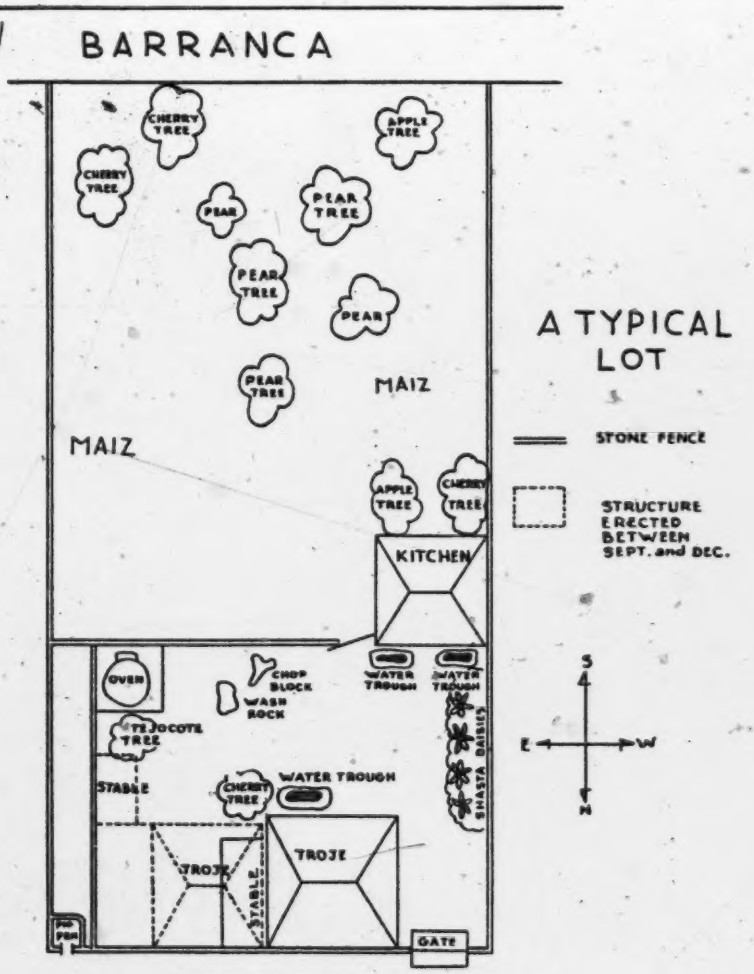

FIGURE 2.—Plan of a typical Cherán lot in the southeast section.

[p. 8]

342 ject, then the "*pisos*" are usually higher, sup-
335 ported by the adobes of the "*capisayo*," and another heavy plank is placed on the ends of the joists. The space between the wall and the ends of the joists is usually covered with shakes. The lower end of the rafters is supported by the "*piso*," the upper by a ridge pole (pirĵ̌ákua in Ihuatzio). The latter in turn rests on two wooden pieces, "*burrito*," or "*zoquete*," forming the top of each triangular adobe "*capisayo*" (pl. 7, lower, right).

Although the preceding roof type is the most common, simpler types are known. In some cases, one wall is lower than the opposite wall and a single shed roof is formed by sloping joists. It should be observed that similar types of construction are used in La Cañada and at Tarecuato. Moreover, examples of all types of stone-
[171] and-adobe construction may be found in nearby Mestizo towns.

SUPPLEMENTARY STRUCTURES

351 Supplementary structures consist of fences,
333 gates, and sheds for storage or for shelter of animals. Fences facing on streets are the most elaborate as a rule. They may consist of dry rock walls made by the house owner, but in the central parts of town are almost always of masonry or masonry topped with adobe brick (pls. 2, lower; 3, right). They are called sérka. The construction differs in no way from that for house walls. The top is covered with shakes held down with a wooden stringer and stones. Adobe fences are most common in the Lake Pátzcuaro and La Cañada regions. Often fences of poles (uaĵ̌ótakua)
351 are employed to divide lots, or especially in the
335 outlying sections of town, along the streets (pl. 3, left). Poles may also be used to raise a masonry or adobe-brick wall somewhat higher, in which case a row of shakes will usually be employed to give privacy as well. No orthodox construction is used for pole structures. One attractive but not very practical fence was made of dry cornstalks bound neatly at top and bottom to small poles. A fence of upright poles or planks is called ĵ̌irindikua.

Gates are usually quite elaborate and serve to close openings to the street. Commonly, the gate is a well-made door, purchased from a carpenter, and swinging from two substantial upright posts. These posts are set in the ground and in addition

351 335 are connected by a piece of wood at top and bottom. Almost invariably they have a small gable roof (úmutakata in Angahuan, the name of the storehouses on posts already described). Two pieces are supported by the gate posts at right angles to the gate. The ends of these are connected with two pieces which support rafters. Construction is like that of a gabled house roof in miniature. Sometimes a light floor is laid, and the space is used to store maize husks for tamales or some similar, not very valuable, material. The gate roofs keep the gate from rotting or warping from rain. They are an inevitable part of the Tarascan landscape and may be seen sometimes in open fields over the entrance to the field even though there be no gate (pls. 3, right; 7, lower, left). In the Lake region, they are roofed with tile, a practice sometimes seen elsewhere (pl. 7, middle, right).

In some cases, however, simpler constructions are used. The gate may simply be upright planks resting in a groove at the bottom and held by cord loops at the top. In the fields, gates are often made by planting two posts with holes chopped in each to receive bars. Such gates are sometimes seen in town also. They are called "*agújas*" in Cherán, but in Parícutin they are called jarásurita.

[continued on p. 20b]

SPECIALIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF SKILLS

463 While a high degree of specialization is characteristic of the Tarascans in comparison with most primitive people, such a term is always relative. Actually almost any man in Cherán is first of all a farmer; only landless men, which means also poor men, are not farmers. Probably most Cherán men are fairly skilled with an ax, sufficiently so to do a reasonably competent job felling a tree, trimming poles, cutting fence posts or ties, and hewing out rough timbers. On the other hand, to make a living at woodworking occupations requires more skill and speed than would be possessed by many men. In the same way, any man might do a fair job of building a dry-stone field wall, but he would not be as fast as a specialist, nor could he put up a masonry wall or lay adobe bricks in a fashion that would meet Cherán standards of fitness. Nevertheless, these facts make an absolutely correct assessment of the

[p. 20a] [continued bottom of page 20b]

SUPPLEMENTARY STRUCTURES

435 The main supplementary structures to be considered are fences, gates, and sheds. The only
● 351 fences involving expenditure are those of masonry-adobe. Costs are the same per meter as for a house wall.

The gate will vary in cost. Often it may consist of only a few planks, which may be second-hand material secured without cost, or even merely a pole or two laid horizontally across the opening. A well-made *zaguán* gate bought from a carpenter will cost about 17 pesos and up, depending on size. The balance of the gate, including the roof over it, will usually be constructed by the house owner. Ordinarily, the few shakes needed will be left over from house building or may be secured for a few cents.

435 Sheds are usually built by the householder. A
343 sizable shed roof might require a bundle of shakes costing 5 pesos. No nails would be used, the shakes being held down by rough-hewn strips of pine and stones.

COMPARISON OF COSTS

435 It is clear from the foregoing data that a ma-
342 sonry-adobe structure is as cheap or slightly cheaper than a wooden house, or "*troje*." It also has more storage space. On the other hand, it requires somewhat more care in upkeep and also more expense to make it look "right" to the Tarascan. The interior, for example, should have a coat of plaster of either adobe or lime and sand. Preferably, so should the exterior. Both should also be whitewashed or kalsomined. None of these costs are included in the estimates.

435 An interesting comparison is made in table 5
342 of the costs of the following four categories of Tarascan houses:

511 (a) What the Tarascan would conceive to be the minimal shelter, which would be far below the Tarascan standard of decency.

(b) Housing considered a poor standard but not impossible.

(c) A respectable standard for a small family.

(d) A high standard for a small family.

Only people of some wealth normally use masonry-adobe structures; consequently, only in this category have I shown costs for this type of housing, without including any "frills" for decoration or finishing.

[364] only on the days preceding a town fiesta. The 653 householder is also expected to work on certain community enterprises, such as repairing roads or bridges and the water system. Likewise, unless 625 he occupies some special position which exempts him, or is well along in years, he will be expected at times to join the *ronda*, or night watch, which polices his *cuartel*, or *barrio*.

Cherán is unique in its attitude toward visitors. 351 We have already mentioned the general occurrence of fences. These are usually high enough to prevent passers-by on the street from peering into the house yard. Visitors always knock at the 574 gate or call out, announcing themselves. As some- 609 times the inmates will not respond to a knock, the call is useful in getting a response. Unless the visitor is a relative, *compadre*, or neighbor

[Continued on p.326]

RELATION OF THE TARASCAN HOUSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

CHERÁN

362 The wooden house, or "*troje*," of Cherán is relatively dry but, in the absence of any method of heating, it is uncomfortably cold most of the year, especially at night. The kitchen floor is [354] frequently damp; although it is heated by fire, ventilation is inadequate, and the smoke often irritating to eyes and throat. On windy days, also, drafts whistle through cracks or under the lower edges of the walls. The masonry-adobe type of construction also presents drawbacks. It is not heated either and, while wind is less apt to penetrate, it is often unsatisfactorily ventilated. Moreover, the dampness climbs up through the walls at least 6 months of every year and into every corner of the room.

Probably the "*troje*," or house loft, can most 251 easily be made impervious to rodents if it be well 362 built, and if bunches of cactus be fastened at strategic points on the outside walls. Rarely, however, is this true. In addition, the roof often permits entry of birds, particularly half-wild domesticated pigeons, and scarcely ever is anything done to prevent their forays on the maize. It is doubtful if the masonry-adobe structure is superior in any respect for loft storage. For main-floor storage it probably is inferior owing to the greater dampness.

[Continued bottom of page 326]
[p. 326]

574 with whom especially friendly relations exist, nor-
609 mally the visitor is not invited into the house yard. Conversation takes place at the gate of the yard; if it bids fair to be protracted, the householder may even step into the street and continue the conversation there, closing the gate behind him.

351 So far as is known, customs in other mountain
574 towns are similar in all respects except for the
184 attitude toward visitors. In most towns fences are rarer than in Cherán, and the visitor is invited to enter. In Sevina, it is customary for the visitor to push open the gate, pass into the middle of the house yard, and then announce himself. Two Cherán men who accompanied Beals to Sevina, commented at length on this difference; they were quite plainly shocked at the custom.

RELATION OF THE TARASCAN HOUSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

362 The major insect pests are fleas. In some vil-
136 lages there are also bedbugs. There seems little to choose between the various types of structures, although the earthen floor of the kitchen facilitates the activities of fleas. At certain seasons of the year, all Tarascan houses swarm with fleas to such an extent that the residents often cannot get a satisfactory night's sleep.

Apparently, the climatic conditions are not propitious for large numbers of houseflies or related species. Those that do exist, however, have free access into houses. Mosquitoes and other noxious insects are unknown at Cherán.

362 In the lack of good medical statistics, it is
164 impossible to estimate the relation between health and housing conditions. Fleas may be responsible for the transmission of some cases of typhus and perhaps other diseases. Relative to most places in Mexico, however, insect-borne disease is probably at a minimum. Head lice and, to
[515] some extent, body lice occur, despite thorough weekly baths, and the crowded living and sleeping conditions in the kitchen must facilitate transmission of the insects.

The most serious health hazards of the Tarascan house probably lie in the damp condition much of the year, lack of ventilation, and close crowding of the inmates, especially at night. These conditions facilitate the spread of all diseases trans-

3: Beals, Carrasco & McCorkle E-5 (1940-1942)1944 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

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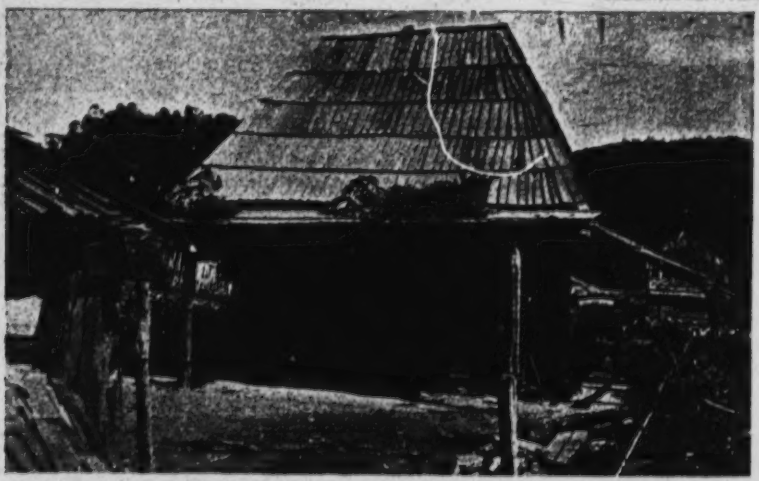

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Upper: "Troje" in Angahuan with ajolote in front in place of a wounds. *Lower:* A street on the outskirts of the town of Cherán. Fences are curiously built of dry straw, supplemented by poles.

[End plate 2]

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Right: Street near the plaza in Cherán. A stone-and-adobe whitewashed structure is visible near the church. The center shows a well-built stone-and-adobe fence capped with straw and shakes, while the houses are of wood. A typical roofed gate is visible left of center. *Left:* Two types of pole fence in Capacuaro. In Cherán such fences are usually found only between lots.

[End plate 3]

3: Beals, Carrasco & McCorkle E-5 (1940-1942)1944 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[P 29-C] Sierra

The house lot is fenced
351 with adobe, stone, or logs; the portion facing the street may be enclosed by a high wall of planks, stone, or adobe, which joins the house at one end. Such structures are called *ʒanʃakata* in the Sierra (pl. 3). Various types of gates are used at the entrance to the house lot; the more common are the double-door affair, and those with logs placed horizontally in slots carved in opposite upright posts.

342 **Historical aspects.**—The provenience of the
171 wooden *troje* presents one of the most puzzling features in Tarascan culture history. The structure of interlocked logs or planks is a relatively uncommon house type in Mexico, where it has a disjunct distribution. It is found in (1) Oaxaca among the Mixe, Mixtec, and Trique groups;

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[P. 32-b]

[423] [311] the western and southern shore often have fields in the Sierra.

Two systems of land ownership—communal and private—prevail in most of modern Tarasca. Since the land reforms of 1915, the *ejido*, a third type of holding, has displaced most of the haciendas around the margins of the Sierra.

Since Spanish contact most of the Tarascan agricultural land has become private property of family heads. Even in the few remaining pueblos which claim complete communal ownership of their lands, a strong individualization of property has developed. The historical process of the shift from communal to private ownership is not clear. Late 18th-century documents on land disputes among the Tarascan pueblos indicate that at that time the communal system prevailed at least in the Sierra. The issuance of individual land titles may not have occurred until after the reforms of 1857. In the Sierra private landholders (*propietarios*) often possess one or more plots in the *plan*, and still others on the less fertile *laderas*. Size of individual holdings varies greatly, since land is purchasable. Normal holdings average 2 to 3 hectares per family. Traces of the communal concept exist in the minds of the modern proprietors. Although legally possible, there is little desire to sell land to nonmembers of the community. If such a transaction should arise, it usually must be approved by the town council.[46] Consequently, pueblo lands are kept intact. Moreover, individual holdings, especially those in the *plan*, are rarely enclosed, for after harvest the fields are used as communal pasture.[47] Accordingly, the final date for removal of crops and the first date for planting in unenclosed lands of each pueblo is communally regulated.

Vestiges of the ancient land system are retained in the special communal holdings found in most modern Tarascan villages. Five pueblos in La Cañada—Tanaquillo, Acachuén, Ichán, Tacuro, and Carapan—retain communal ownership of all lands, at least in name. Family heads are allotted one plot of *temporal* near the pueblo and another of *humedad* in the Sierra to the south and east. The individual allotments vary from 2 to 4

[623] [351]

[46] The Tarascan town council is normally composed of the *representante del pueblo* and his committee of six. The *representante* deals with most internal affairs of the pueblo.

[47] Fences and ditches are used most frequently to divide cultivated lands from pasture and to separate individual holdings on the *laderas*, or slope land.

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
[End Plate 2]
NU34 Tarasco NU34

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Plate II. Tarascan Houses and Mode of Travel

[76] *Upper*, Tarascan homes, wooden fences are a recent innovation.
[103] *Lower*, Tarascans returning to mountains after selling firewood in
[438] Morelia.